

# #SODAKSUFFRAGE ACTIVITY PAGE

## *In Their Own Words, pg. 1*

Written by Liz Almlie, Pierre, 2020.  
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### Your Task, Should You Choose to Accept It...

Read two or more of the following transcriptions of historical writings about suffrage for South Dakota women. You can also read them with a family member, friend, or classmate. At the end, there are questions to use to review and/or start a discussion on what you read.

### Marietta Bones, Webster



*Letter sent to the Statehood Constitutional Convention in September 1885, at Sioux Falls*

“Webster, Sept. 15, 1885—‘Mr. President and delegates of the convention: In your wise deliberations let me implore you in behalf of your sister, mother or wife, to place the women of our glorious territory on an equality before the law with yourselves. Do not force this important question to a vote of the people, remembering that a large majority of them are as ignorant of the advantages freedom would be to them, as were the slaves in the south: who, had they endorsed the action of John Brown at Harper’s Ferry in their interest, this country would have been saved the horrors of a terrible war. Give us equality—not to make us manly—but more womanly; we do not aspire to being the ‘head of the family,’ but are honest and just enough to let each individual possess a ‘head’ of their own. Industrial and property rights are now wholly in the keeping of men—the law makers; therefore how necessary it is that we women have practical equality to defend ourselves against this great odds. Some of your honorable body may claim that this matter is inexpedient to act upon at the present time—in our opinion the opportune time—and inexpedient in you to at any time be anything less than just; and in the language of your pre-eminent president of the convention—”how necessary it is for us to elect only good and honest men to office, and to do this woman must likewise act her part in the labor of arresting the advance of crime and corruption. Although through timidity—(timidity, mark you! also remember what the bible says about cowards)—the politician is slow to invest her with the higher duties and obligations of American citizenship.”

As a pecuniary interest to Dakota, what can your convention do more than to make this the grandest state in the union for woman? Then will they emigrate here by thousands, to a land where they are not taxed without a voice in what their money is to be used for, another benefit of no small importance this would prove to our future aggrandizement—in giving to our marriageable men wives that are free instead of slaves. Gentlemen of the convention, do yourselves honor in bestowing upon oppressed woman all the privileges in law that you so much enjoy, and thus immortalize your names in the third volume of woman suffrage history now being edited, as well as securing the heartfelt gratitude of every intelligent (for they only care to vote) women in this semi-republic; as this country is not governed by the consent of the people, and cannot be with one-half of its citizens disfranchised—it is in no sense a republican form of government, and is as aptly said by Matilda Joslyn Gage: “The ballot is consent.” Why not now do for us what you can to secure this priceless boon?

Very respectfully, Marietta M. Bones.”

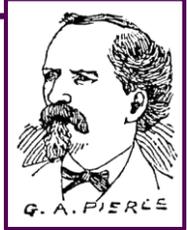
*Press and Daily Dakotian* (Yankton SD), September 21, 1885

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn91099608/1885-09-21/ed-1/seq-1/>

## *In Their Own Words, pg. 2*

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### Gov. Gilbert A. Pierce, Bismarck



*Remarks issued March 13, 1885 with his veto of John Pickler's suffrage bill, which had passed the territorial Council and House.*

I hereby return house file No. 71, with my objections to its becoming a law. A measure of this kind demands careful and candid consideration, both because of its importance and because of the acknowledged sincerity and high character of those who favor it. There are certain reasons, however, why I cannot approve such a measure at this time, and other reasons why I cannot approve this particular bill. It is desirable in my judgement, that we act, so far as possible as if we were governed, restrained and guided by a constitution adopted by ourselves. If we had a constitution modeled after the states an extraordinary proposition like this would be submitted to the people. If congress thinks woman suffrage wise it has the power to establish it. It is unfair to shift the responsibility on the territory and then hold them responsible for alleged imprudent legislation. I am assured the enactment of this law will delay our claims to statehood, and also in so critical a period it is better that no pretext whatever be given for such postponement.

It is doubted by many if a majority of the women of Dakota want the franchise. The point is made, and a very good one, that the fact that one woman does not want a right is not justifiable reason for refusing it to another who does, yet it must not be forgotten that the enfranchisement of women confers not only a privilege but a grave burden and responsibility. We condemn the man who neglects to vote as recreant to his duty. If women are enfranchised the right conferred becomes an obligation as imperious to them as to men, as on those opposed as on those who favor the act. I think the women of Dakota should have a voice in determining whether they should assume this burden or not. So much for the general proposition.

There are two other features of this bill which I can scarcely think satisfactory to the advocates of woman suffrage themselves. I am satisfied that they should appear in a measure claiming to advance the rights of women. If the vote of a woman is needed anywhere it is in our cities. In many existing city charters a district clause appears providing that males alone shall possess the qualifications of electors... A still more objectionable feature, and one deliberately inserted, is the clause debarring women from the right to hold office. If the word male had been stricken out of the code, and no other action taken, they would have been eligible, and I believe there is a wide feeling that many offices, particularly those connected with penal and benevolent institutions, could be most appropriately filled with women, but this clause practically forbids their appointment. If women are good enough to vote they are good enough to be voted for. If they are qualified to choose officials, they are qualified to be chosen. I don't say that I would approve this measure were it otherwise worded, but I certainly would not endorse a bill which thus keeps the word of promise to the ear and breaks it to the hope which deliberately and avowedly debars and disqualifies women while assuming to exalt and honor them. These objections are apart from the abstract right of women to the ballot, but they show how necessary it is to approach such a subject with deliberation. If women are to be enfranchised let it be done, not as a thirty days' wonder, but as a merited reform resulting from mature reflection, approved by the public conscience and sanctioned by the enlightened judgment of the people.

(Signed) Gilbert A. Pierce. Governor.

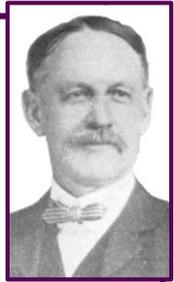
*Press and Daily Dakotian* (Yankton SD), March 18, 1885

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn91099608/1885-03-18/ed-1/seq-1/>

## *In Their Own Words, pg. 3*

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Clate R. Tinan, Kimball



**“The Suffrage Question.** The less a constitution of a commonwealth is monkeyed with the better. It is much easier to get a measure into a constitution than out of it. Thus, because usually no opposition develops through the press or the public to almost any fad agitators and alleged reformers may advocate. This was true of prohibition and is equally true of the woman suffrage question. We are being told over and over again in this state at present that the sole line of woman’s advancement, and her only hope of emancipation from the bondage of unjust laws lies through equal suffrage. Just where and in what manner the feminine portion of South Dakota are suffering through legislation pernicious to their interests is not apparent. It will be time enough to grant the right of suffrage to the great body of women when other than an insignificant number desire it and when those who advocate it can show good results from the radical departure elsewhere...

The modicum of reverence which the average man now entertains for woman would vanish like a puff of smoke, let her once become his partner in political intrigues and trickery. As well expect vestal nuns to leave their cloisters and revel in the can-can, yet still be honored and adored as saints, as to expect woman to defile herself in the turbid pool of latterday politics and retain the sweetness of her primal dower.

There are few men who do not hold to the belief, whether supported by fact or not, that a good woman is only a half note in the descent from angelhood. For heaven’s sake, let women seek to keep the belief alive, for when man’s idealization of the sex flies out of the window all sorts of ugly possibilities march in at the door.

... And can any woman do her whole duty to home and children and if she divides her time between them and the issues of a political campaign? Can she be central committeeman and home-keeper at one and the same time? Surely all true service is through its intirety. One cannot serve two masters, anyhow or anywhere. Either she must give herself up wholly to what she undertakes or fail to reach the high standard for which she aims. Let woman’s enthusiasm be felt at home rather than in the caucus; let her influence make itself manifest in the lives of her children rather than upon the voters of her precinct. Let her train up a race of brave and loyal Johns and consecrated Marys to make the world more wholesome as the result of her teachings when she has gone to her just reward. Let woman stand back of suffrage and shape the coming voter. Instill a loftier patriotism, a purer zeal and a more conspicuous probity into the hearts of her sons that shall tell with grand effect upon the coming generations. Give the nation a new dynasty of mothers and its future would be assured. Divert women from the interests that center in their homes and the result will be much like what would follow the withdrawal of the sunshine from an orchard in the mid splendor of its blooming—immature fruit and wormy nubbins. What would be forty votes cast by her to her half dozen noble lives sent spinning on their eternal way, sanctified by a pure woman’s influence and fortified against temptation by her love.

The world today needs good mothers more than anything else.

The *Graphic* would teach woman with all the eloquence that pen can command that home is her kingdom, her children’s hearts her work-shop and the shaping of their destinies of more account than any other achievement. Let her not be lured by the uncertain clamor of false trumpets, but carry her influence in this world in the shape of a lily rather than a ballot, remembering that she can attain to nothing sweeter or nobler this side of heaven than the verdict—’A womanly woman, a faithful mother.’”

*Kimball Graphic* (SD), October 29, 1898

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn99068076/1898-10-29/ed-1/seq-1/>

## *In Their Own Words, pg. 4*

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### South Dakota Votes for Women Campaign, 1909

“Sioux Falls, S.D., Nov. 10—In accordance with their intention to wage an aggressive campaign in South Dakota in the hope of carrying the woman suffrage amendment to the state constitution, the women suffragists of South Dakota have as the result of an executive session held by the state suffrage association issued an address to the people of the state, which is in part as follows:

To every wage-earning woman; to every woman in the colleges and schools either as instructor or student; to every woman who recognizes the right of the wife to her own earnings; to every woman who believes in ‘equal pay for equal work;’ to every woman who believes the mother ought to have, equally with the father, the right to guardianship of their children;

To every man who realizes the value of the ballot to men; to every man who wants a ‘square deal’ for himself; to every man who wishes to see the women of the commonwealth lifted out of political companionship with male idiots, paupers and criminals; to every man who holds that liberty is the birthright of all the people;

To every man and woman who believes in the declaration of our forefathers that ‘Taxation without representation is tyranny;’ to every man and woman who believes in a single standard of morals; to every citizen who would give the country a higher standard of citizenship;

Whereas, The United Mine Workers of America, the Western Federation of Miners, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the International Typographical union, the International Bricklayers and Stonemasons’ union, the United Teamsters of America and other great bodies of wage earners by resolution of their convention have placed themselves on record in favor of equal political rights for men and women, and,

Whereas, The National Grange has several times officially indorsed woman suffrage, and,

Whereas, The great American Federation of Labor at its 28<sup>th</sup> annual convention reaffirmed its position on our question and stated its belief that ‘political equality is as necessary to the economic independence of women as it is for their brothers in all branches of labor’ and,

Whereas, At the same convention they ‘pledged the affiliated unions of the land to earnestly work for their political freedom,’ therefore,

Resolved, That in the coming struggle for the enfranchisement of the women of our commonwealth, we call upon organized labor to fulfill this pledge by working and voting for the woman suffrage amendment in 1910.

Whereas, We believe the statement of a famous Methodist bishop that ‘the great vices in our large cities will never be conquered until the ballot is put into the hands of women,’ and,

Whereas, The safety of our people and our most sacred institution is endangered by those vices which men alone are powerless to suppress, therefore,

Resolved, That we call upon all good citizens to lend the aid of their influence and to contribute of their time and their money to give the ballot to the women of our state in order that a ‘government of the people, for the people and by the people’ may be established in South Dakota.”

*Mitchell Capital (SD), November 11, 1909*

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn2001063112/1909-11-11/ed-1/seq-2/>

## *In Their Own Words, pg. 5*

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P.E.J.

“Recently in discussing the suffrage question with a man who is opposed, the writer was somewhat surprised to hear the chief argument brought forward that if women were enfranchised, they would seek office, children would be neglected and homes broken up and that woman’s place is at home.

Every true suffragist believes in the homes as the foundation of this great nation, and that motherhood is the most exalted function that any human being can possess. But all women are not mothers and there are many mothers who are the sole support of their children and parents, often of their drunken or invalid husbands. In New York City alone there are twenty-five thousand mothers who are supporting their husbands. Most of these husbands are drunkards, some are invalids, some can’t get work and some don’t wish to get work. Many single women remain unmarried because of parents or brothers and sisters dependent on them. In the older states, especially in New England, there are many thousands of women who can never marry because there are not men enough to go around. There are six millions of self-supporting women in the United States, besides a still greater army of women, who not only keep the home, bear and rear children, but also help make the living in store, office or on the farm. There are many thousands of women today in South Dakota, who besides the care of the house and children, raise all the poultry, milk the cows, make butter and sell enough butter, eggs, poultry and vegetables to buy their groceries and their own and their children’s clothes, yet many people think they are supported by their husbands. Many of these farmer’s wives work more hours a day, do much harder work and have less time to give to home and children than a woman would have who filled any county office. Why is it that no objection is made to women neglecting home and children to make money at the washtub, in the store or office or on the farm, but only if the occupation carries some honor and a good salary? She may and often does do all or most of the work for her husband who holds a county office, but if he dies, she can not take his place as county treasurer, register of deeds or any other office except superintendent of schools.

‘In the beginning,’ we are told ‘God created man in his own image; male and female created, he them and gave them dominion.’ No man has any right to say what any women’s sphere shall be any more than women should say that all men should be farmers or doctors. Each woman should be as free as a man to choose her sphere. First of all she is a human being and accountable to God for the best use of the talents she possesses. If she is a normal woman and has the right opportunity she will choose to be a wife and mother, but in the name of justice and humanity let every one of the six millions of self-supporting women and all other women in the United States have as good a chance to earn their own living as men have, even to the holding of any office for which they are qualified.

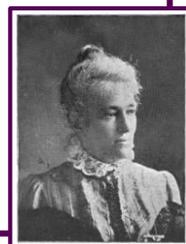
The friend mentioned above who is ‘opposed.’ is an intelligent man, reader of the best books and is honest in his opinion, but he has not studied this question and is prejudiced. A few men like Dr. Lyman Abbott and Dr. Buckley add to prejudice a determination as far as possible to keep women in subjection. When you talk of justice to them they see lions! lions!! lions!!!

P.E.J. (originally printed in the Sioux Falls Daily Press.)

*Bad River News* (Philip SD), July 21, 1910

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn95076628/1910-07-21/ed-1/seq-1/>

*One of the leading suffragists and temperance workers at the time was Philena Everett Johnson from Highmore. Her name fits the given initials, but it’s hard to confirm she was the author. Photo of Johnson: Perkins, History of Hyde County, South Dakota (1908), 94.*



# #SODAKSUFFRAGE ACTIVITY PAGE

## *In Their Own Words, pg. 6*

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### Your Turn!

Questions for review and discussion:

1. Was the author's message for or against women being able to vote?
2. Who was their audience?
3. Did they want their audience to do something? If so, what was it?
4. Did the author think of voting as a right, a privilege, or a duty?
5. What did the author say about the power of voting? What would, or could, result from voting?
6. What words, phrases, or images did the author use to describe women?
7. Did the author think women, their activities, or their identities will be changed if they were able to vote? How?
8. What prejudices did the author display in their writing?

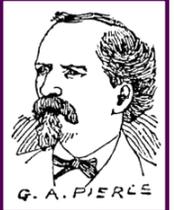
### Marietta Bones, Webster

Marietta M. Bones (1842-1901) was born in Pennsylvania and came to South Dakota before 1881. She represented Dakota Territory in the national suffrage association and took the railroad to campaign for suffrage in 1883. She later argued with other suffragists, including Susan B. Anthony, and after the 1890 state suffrage campaign, Bones started to work against woman's suffrage.



### Gov. Gilbert A. Pierce, Bismarck

Gilbert A. Pierce (1839-1901) was a lawyer, journalist, and author who lived in Indiana before being appointed by the president to be governor of Dakota Territory in 1884. He was governor at the capital in Bismarck until February 1887. He stayed in Bismarck, worked as a journalist, and became a U.S. Senator in 1889. He later lived in British Columbia, Washington, and California.



### Clate R. Tinan, Kimball

Clate R. Tinan (1852-1931) was born in Ohio, came to Dakota Territory from Chicago in 1883, and bought the *Kimball Enterprise* newspaper, renaming it the *Kimball Graphic*. His editorial voice of the *Graphic* reflected his Democrat party politics. He ran the *Graphic* until 1918. He was a leader in the State Press association and dedicated a lot of work to wildlife conservation.



### Philena Everett Johnson, Highmore

Philena Everett Johnson (1841-1911) came to Dakota Territory in 1883 where she and husband Eli bought a newspaper. Johnson started suffrage advocacy in 1889 and became president of the state suffrage association. She was also a state leader in the Women's Christian Temperance Union. In January 1911, Johnson contracted pneumonia in Pierre while lobbying for suffrage and passed away.

